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A SIGNIFICANT TENDENCY IN CURRICULUM-MAKING

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The first step in curriculum-making is, of course, to decide upon the developmental results that are to be the outcomes of the training.

For a long time our profession has discussed the aims of education, but with no great result. Endless fervor has been expended in maintaining such radiant objectives as "culture," "social efficiency," "self-realization," "the harmonious development of the individual," "mental discipline," "character-building," and what not more of glorious vagueness. These objectives, however, are so general and so all-inclusive of anything and everything as to provide our profession with no real guidance. It has been like trying to pilot a ship by an unanalyzed firmament, and that overcast, rather than by clear particular stars.

In the actual curriculum-making, no attention was paid to these cloudlike objectives for the simple reason that in the nature of things they could provide no guidance. A new course of study was made by the good old stone-age method of assembling personal likings for subject-matter, by borrowing materials from courses previously used, from those used otherwhere, and from textbooks. It was an easy, comfortable method, requiring little labor, less thought, and not even the conception of scientific technique, much less its use. The studies were themselves regarded as the ends of education and not the means of attaining desirable developmental results.

The most significant feature of the work of practical curriculum-making today is the tendency first to particularize with definiteness and in detail the objectives, and to do this in the light of actual human needs without regard to the nature or content of

particular studies or textbooks as they may have been elaborated under the fortunately moribund conception of mere blind subject-teaching.

A good example of this new method of approach is presented by Rochester, New York, in connection with the construction of their new and epoch-making course in elementary-school reading. They first set up such ultimate developmental objectives as the following:¹

1. Permanent interest in reading newspapers.
2. Habit of reading newspapers.
3. Permanent interest in reading magazines.
4. Habit of reading magazines.
5. Permanent interest in reading books of travel.
6. Permanent interest in reading books of science.
7. Permanent interest in reading books of history and biography.
8. Permanent interest in reading books of poetry and fiction.
9. Desire to read these various things.
10. Habit of reading these various things.
11. Ability to read effectively and economically as a necessary permanent study habit.
12. Ability to analyze the thought of books or articles read.
13. Ability to interpret and to make application of things read.
14. Ability to judge the relative values of facts met with in the reading.
15. Ability to judge the validity of statements in the light of known evidence.
16. Ability to reproduce the thought of selections read.
17. Ability to understand problems presented in the reading.
18. Ability to follow written and printed directions.
19. Habit of reading with concentration.
20. Ability to use the library reference books and indexes economically and effectively.
21. Ability to use a card index economically and effectively.

¹ The objectives here presented are taken from a chart prepared for guidance of teachers entitled "Attainments in Reading." On the chart they are presented in outline form; we have here expanded the wording and altered the arrangement for the sake of clearness.

22. Ability to use book helps—notes, index, glossary, chapter headings, etc.—economically and effectively.
23. Ability to read silently with proper speed and comprehension.
24. Fluency in oral reading.
25. Command over a good vocabulary.
26. Habit of using the dictionary.
27. Habit of handling books with care.

These objectives are definite. They are not cloudlike, pointing to nothing. Each of them awakens in the experienced teacher a wealth of definite ideas relative to things to be done by way of attaining it. For example, "Ability to read silently with speed and comprehension" suggests the need of an abundance of interesting books, newspapers, and magazines; the use of abundant supplementary and collateral reading in connection with various subjects; the organization of a technique of study in connection with all of the subjects which allow much silent reading, etc. It gives a definite criterion or point of view from which to judge the entire reading situation. In the same way each of the specific objectives points toward its own special road.

With these objectives before supervisors and teachers when they set out to make a course of study in reading, it does not matter whether or not they have before them other printed courses of study or textbooks. The goals themselves point to the roads that are to be traveled. Naturally, they must know children and social processes and professional things in great number and detail in order really to see the road which is so dictated. With these objectives before them teachers and supervisors can then formulate a balanced, proportioned, and sequential series of the pupil activities and experiences which constitute a reading curriculum of wholly modern type. This the schools of Rochester are doing; and they have already advanced far.)

A second excellent example comes from Los Angeles. Their new course of study in reading is *addressed to the children* and points out to them at each level of their progress the goals of their efforts. For example, to the entering children of the B-1 grade they say:

You will be ready to undertake A-3 Reading when you can do the following things:

1. When you are spending at least sixty minutes a day on reading and phonetics.
2. When you know at sight one hundred words from the list of one hundred and twenty-five on flash cards chosen from the main list.
3. When you can use any of the one hundred words in sentences with the following word phrases: This is, I see, I have, We have, I can, We can, Can you, Have you, I like, We like; a, the, an, etc.
4. When you can read the first, second, fourth, and fifth stories in the *Free and Treadwell Primer*.
5. When you are able to read no less than ten pages of your *Supplementary Unit Primer*.
6. When you can speak the English language well enough to undertake the work of the next grade intelligently.
7. When you read a sentence as a whole and not word by word. If a sentence is long, you will phrase it properly.
8. When you can read print from flash cards or from your books, also standard script as written on the blackboard by your teacher.
9. When you can read silently and interpret sentence units with your required vocabulary as "Was the cat black?" or "Can a dog fly?"
10. When you have read the *Jack Straw Stories*. (Optional.)

To the B-3 children, after giving a list of readings appropriate to their degree of maturity, they say:

When you can

1. Read orally at the rate of ninety words per minute or more any selection in the assigned B-3 reading.
2. Read orally at the rate of seventy words per minute or more any selection above and give the thought.
3. Repeat from memory "The Daisies," p. 9, and "The Night Wind," pp. 45-47.

Go into A-3 Reading.

Notice that the form of statement gives the individual pupils two kinds of objectives: (1) the specific *abilities* which they are to attain, (2) the *grade level* they can attain by making effort. And both are so clear that even small children can understand.

In arithmetic to the B-3 pupils they say:

When you know

1. The forty-five combinations.
2. Addition and subtraction of numbers within thousands, with reduction and carrying.
3. Tables of 2's and 5's to 5 times 10.

4. One-half of even numbers and one-fifth of numbers ending in 5 and 0 within the tables of 2 and 5.
5. Multiplication by 2 and 5 within thousands.
6. Addition and subtraction of United States money.

You may go into A-3.

In the language and grammar course to the A-5 pupils they say:

If you can

1. Talk before the class a few minutes, telling concisely how to play a game, make a simple toy, give directions for going to the store or some interesting item of news, observing clear enunciation and good usage.
2. Write a short story or paragraph upon a selected subject, sticking to the point, using clean-cut sentences.
3. Copy accurately in limited time selected material and take dictation.
4. Recognize adjectives in selected sentences and separate simple sentences into entire subject and entire predicate.

You are ready for A-6 Language.

In the handwriting course, to seventh-grade pupils they say:

If you can

Write from blackboard the paragraph from Zaner Grammar Grade Chart "When in the course of common school events it becomes necessary to improve writing, it is well to consider the important elements that enter into the art" at the rate of eighty letters a minute, grading 70 per cent or above, by using arm movement and sitting in correct position (arm movement must be used in all applied work).

Your standing entitles you to B-8 Grade.

The plan is consistently employed in every grade from B-1 to A-8 in reading, arithmetic, spelling, language, and penmanship. Except for the arithmetic, the various grade standards are, very wisely it seems, stated in terms of *ability to do things* rather than in terms of knowledge; and even the arithmetic course could be so worded without change of intent or content since the course is really setting up arithmetic skills as the objectives.

As the course thus reads, it appears that a pupil of sufficient application and native ability might promote himself in a subject at any time that he makes up his mind to do so. That, of course, is one of the logical and desirable outcomes of the plan. The usual type of pupil organization does not, however, assume diversity of native ability or application or felt needs or will to achieve, and has not, therefore, made provision for such self-promotion at

any time through self-directed effort. This particularizing and individualizing of the objectives, however, has made very clear the administrative problem; and in certain schools Los Angeles is making an experimental attempt to solve it.

In the Micheltorena Street School, for example, they are breaking away as far as conditions permit from the usual hard and fast plan of classification, grading, and promotion and are classifying the student body into homogeneous groups, each of which is permitted to advance as rapidly as it is able without regard to grade standards. And within the group, individual pupils are assisted to make progress in the several studies according to special abilities and desires. They are employing departmental instruction, promotion by subjects, the assistance of unassigned teachers, individual instruction, pupil self-direction, supervised study, promotion at irregular times, the dropping of subjects for a time in which a pupil has made advance much beyond his class, and substituting some extra, optional subject for the time, etc. There are so many transfers of pupils to and from any such experimental school within a large city that it is not practicable to depart too far from the usual type of grade organization until the several possibilities have been tried out in sufficient measure to warrant their general adoption throughout the system.

Let us note a third example of work which illustrates this modern progressive tendency. Some months ago the Detroit school system, already in progressive position, drew up carefully formulated plans, involving fundamental changes in organization and procedure, by way of making still further progress. In their report, as yet unpublished, occurs this highly significant statement:

A course of study should consist of three parts:

Part 1. Objective definitions of the nature and degree of ability to be developed by a given educational activity.

Part 2. Illustrations of the way subject-matter is to be used in developing ability.

Part 3. Suggestions as to the best selection of subject-matter suitable for use in developing the desired ability.

Here is recognized a sequence of curriculum factors which are largely unrecognized or ignored in the usual type of curriculum-making. The first step here is to define the nature and degree of

human ability which is to be developed. In other words, the first step is to particularize the ends or goals of education, not in terms of subject-matter to be mastered, but in terms of ability to do things, the doing being otherwise interpreted to mean all kinds of activities which make up human life upon its various levels.

After decision has been made relative to the abilities to be developed, then, and not till then, is it possible to assemble the subject-matter most suitable for developing these abilities. Mastery of subject-matter is not an end in itself: the end lies beyond in human characteristics and qualities and capabilities. Some subject-matter is of value in attaining these abilities; other subject-matter is of little or no value in attaining them. If schools merely teach subject-matter of history, geography, science, drawing, etc., without definite reference to qualities and abilities to be developed, then they are likely much of the time to be expending time, effort, and money upon things valueless, and only a portion of the time devoting themselves to things of sufficient profit. And even when the latter is being done, they have no criterion to employ in adjusting the relative emphases upon different portions of the subject-matter. Thus even the useful portions may be badly balanced.

The Detroit statement suggests the question, Just what are the particular human qualities and abilities which should be developed? The authors of this statement have not yet drawn up this particularized schedule; but their statement of sequences indicates a recognition of this task as an immediate responsibility. As a matter of fact, they have already decided upon the general classes of human qualities and abilities that are to be developed:

In dealing with each unit of activity or subject-matter there should be systematic effort to utilize whatever contribution it may be able to make to each of the seven great divisions of educational objectives: (1) health; (2) command of fundamental processes; (3) worthy home membership; (4) vocation; (5) civic education; (6) worthy use of leisure time; (7) ethical character.

Along with this recognition of specific abilities as the ends of education, there arises naturally and inevitably a recognition of the impossibility of uniform courses of study and uniform types of procedure. They say:

There must be greater consideration paid to the needs and natures of the individual child. Children have been proved to differ so radically in their capacities and rates of progress that new forms of classroom procedure are imperative.

This recognition of individual differences and of the need of having a curriculum for different children appropriate to their natures and capacities is introducing into curriculum-making numberless highly baffling problems not met with in the old, simple plan of drawing up merely a syllabus of studies and topics. The curriculum is coming to be defined as *a series of living experiences* on the part of the children which look toward developing within them the specific qualities and abilities. Thus the curriculum is a thing which exists within the children, and within them differently according to their natures, capacities, social opportunities, social stimulations, etc. Different pupils will make different speeds in attaining similar goals. They will cover different amounts of subject-matter in the same unit of time. They will utilize different types of activities or experience in attaining similar objectives, according to their original natures, desires, opportunities, social stimulations, etc. It will be necessary to develop a hitherto neglected technique of student self-direction. The pupils must themselves have a large measure of understanding of the objectives which they are to attain. In no other way will it be possible actually to administer the diversities of adjustment which appear to be desirable. The plan appears to tend toward the elimination of the uniform course of study; there seems to be no logical limit short of an individual curriculum for each separate child. The trend of present-day practice is being more and more influenced by the dictates of the logic.

The problems just enumerated are only the beginning of a new and bewildering series which appears to stretch out interminably. There is the problem of determining the ultimate goals and of differentiating them for different individual pupils; the problem of fixing the standards of progress for different years or grades from early childhood to the full attainment of the ultimate objectives; developing a technique of self-direction and self-inspection of results on the part of the pupils; developing a technique of leader-

ship, guidance, and stimulation on the part of teachers rather than a mere technique of subject-teaching; developing a technique of analysis of each individual pupil's nature and needs; developing workable plans of administering this pupil-analysis; utilization of the pupil's experiences for the entire twenty-four hours of the day and every day of the year instead of only one hour in every nine; developing courses of great width and depth and height and richness for those of large capacity who are destined for social leadership and for bearing the world's major responsibilities, while developing courses of less full content for those who lack the native ability to do anything more; developing a practicable technique of measuring attainments of every desirable kind; developing a technique of stimulating pupils to strive vigorously toward the attainment of the specific abilities; developing textbooks and working helps of every sort appropriate to a greatly enlarged degree of pupil self-direction and teacher leadership; developing a flexibility of grading and promotion greatly in excess of that employed in the usual school system of today; developing an effective technique of "motivation," of "project method," of "teaching pupils how to study"; and very many other things.

When curriculum-making was only subject-syllabus-making, these many problems did not appear closely to concern us; but now that curriculum-making is coming to be the formulation of a series of child activities and experiences which must in the nature of things differ from child to child, curriculum-formulation is found to be intimately knit up with every problem involved in the organization, administration, and management of the pupil population.